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GOLDMINE

THE MUSIC COLLECTOR'S MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 2018

ACE FREHLEY

Iconic **KISS** guitarist still smokin' with brand new solo release, ***Spaceman.*** p.68

Plus Little Steven & the Disciples of Soul • The Guess Who • MC5 • John & Yoko • Twisted Sister • AND MORE!

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Here is a list of upcoming podcasts:
Episode 39: The Moody Blues' John Lodge visits to let us in on his latest music. Of course we'll be talking about his Moody past, too.
Episode 38: Power pop rocker Ken Sharp talks about his latest full-length, "Beauty In the Back Seat." It's his best yet and we'll play some cuts, too!
Episode 37: A debate amongst invited guests on the 20 albums that invented Progressive Rock.
Episode 36: A talk with iHavelt exec, Michael Veenswyk. iHavelt is a new collection and trading platform for vinyl, CDs and tapes.

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PHOTO BY MARK WEISS

ACE FREHLEY, KISS

Madison Square Garden, NY, NY – February 18, 1977

KISS were on their Rock And Roll Over tour, performing for the first time at Madison Square Garden, and photographer Mark Weiss moved within the first few rows to take this Vintage Shot.

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JAY GILBERT

ACE

SPACEMAN **ACE FREHLEY** TALKS ABOUT HIS LATEST SOLO ALBUM AND GROWING UP A 'BRONX BOY.'

BY KEN SHARP

In the '60s while growing up in the Bronx, budding teenaged guitarist Paul "Ace" Frehley had his share of formidable six-string heroes: Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix and Pete Townshend. Decades later, as a founding member of KISS, a result of his fiery and inventive playing, Ace turned the tables and became widely regarded as a pioneering and highly influential guitar hero whose mighty fretboard prowess is now routinely cited as a source of lifelong inspiration by the likes of Pearl Jam's Stone Gossard, Lenny Kravitz, "Dimebag" Darrell and countless others. Sober for over a decade, Ace is back with a strong solo album appropriately titled *Spaceman*, which demonstrates that this revered hard rock music icon still has a few aces up his sleeve.

ES HIGH

Goldmine: *On the new album,* Spaceman, *you cover the Eddie Money song "I Wanna Go Back." If you could revisit one moment in your life and go back again, what would you like to do?*

Ace Frehley: That's a really hard question to answer. (long pause) Probably opening night of the KISS reunion tour in '96 at Tiger Stadium in Detroit. That was such a special evening. We sold out in like 48 minutes; it was crazy! I remember during that show feeling like I had time traveled. Here I am in the same costume with the same makeup on—the makeup kind of covers up your age a little with the white face—and I'm looking at everyone going, *Is this a reunion or is this the '70s?* (laughs)

GM: *On the new album,* Spaceman—*a title coined by Gene Simmons—you co-wrote two songs with Gene, "Without You I'm Nothing" and "Your Wish Is My Command." Tell us about how that came together and the songwriting session that ensued at your studio in San Diego.*

AF: I wrote two songs with Gene in three hours. We've all matured and his writing skills have obviously developed to a higher level just like mine has. I'm not loaded anymore so we were on the same mental plane. He just suggested some stuff and I started playing some chords to his bass parts. We wrote two songs in three hours, it was crazy! It felt like no time had passed. I have a video of us working together in the studio that my fiancé, Rachael (Gordon) shot with her iPhone. (laughs)

GM: *What has it been like to reconnect as friends independent of your tenure in Kiss with Gene, whom you'll be touring with in Australia, and Paul, who sang Free's "Fire and Water" on your* Origins *album?*

AF: It's been really good. I originally tried to contact Gene to work on a song on my *Origins* album. Over the years I've been friendlier with Gene more so than with Paul. Paul was always kind of the loner in the band. We knew Gene was off screwing some chick and me and Peter were together getting loaded or getting loaded separately. (laughs) But I never knew what Paul was doing or never really paid too much attention to it. That's kind of the way it was. But how I got Paul involved on my *Origins* album was I just gave him a call. I said, "Hey Paul, I'm doing this album and I wanted to see if you wanted to sing a song on it?" He said, "Yes, it sounds like fun." And I said, "It's an album of covers." We were kicking around a few song ideas. He brought up "My Generation" by The Who but I said, "I think that's a song that you can't really re-do because it's such a classic song." And then I said, "Let's think about it," and I called him back the next day and said, "How about 'Fire and Water' by Free?" Paul's a huge fan of Paul Rodgers and he said, "I think that would be great." So I cut the track and I emailed him the Pro Tools files. He cut the vocal with his engineer and sent it back and we had a song. He did a great job with the track.

GM: *Paul took part in the video shoot for "Fire and Water" as well.*

AF: Yeah. Pretty much we had done all the principal photography and he was done and they were gonna shoot my smoking guitar in the hallway, which is offstage, just to get it intercut with the stage performances. I said, "Well, you can split now," and he said, "No, I'll hang around," which was really cool. We had a blast hanging out together. Being able to do projects with Paul and Gene has a lot to do with getting sober, that makes things much easier.

GM: *"Bronx Boy" is the first song fans heard from the new record. What's the most Bronx thing about you?*

AF: Probably my accent. (laughs) You can take the boy out of the Bronx but you can't get the Bronx out of the boy. (laughs) Growing up in the Bronx was really an education. I mean, by the time I hit 13 years old I got tired of getting beaten up—I decided to join a gang 'cause when you're in a gang you have protection. Nobody is gonna screw around with you because they know there'll be retribution. But then again, you're in a situation that you're with these guys who are giving you a phone call saying, "We gotta rumble tonight," just like *West Side Story*, (laughs) meeting in a schoolyard with chains and knives. Or someone in the gang might say, "We're gonna rob a warehouse tonight." It was all this crazy stuff and I was going, "What am I getting involved in?" Like I said in my book, *No Regrets*, thank God I had my guitar playing skills. At the same time I was trying to get away from the gang, I was playing in bands so I could use that as an excuse on the weekends when the gang was going out to do something. I said, "I can't, I have a gig." That's pretty much how I got out of being in a gang. (laughs)

GM: *Back in '67, '68 when you were 17 or 18 years old, if I walked into your bedroom what would I encounter?*
AF: I had posters on the wall. I had a big Bob Dylan poster. I had a couple of paintings that I did up on the wall and albums covers as well. The ceiling had one bright light bulb in the center of the room and I had painted in luminous paint flames going away from the ceiling. So when you turned the lights off all of a sudden you'd see these flames coming away from the light. Obviously eventually it faded, just like on a watch dial. Then I had a multi-colored three-by-three foot painting I did in Day-Glo; it was an amazing painting. I remember going back to my mother's house to try and get it. We actually took a saw and cut the painting out of the wall but it crumbled.

GM: *How would you describe that painting?*
AF: It was a psychedelic head with things coming out of it. Believe it or not I think I photographed it and I have the photograph somewhere. But the photograph doesn't transfer the Day-Glo paint look. It was all done in Day-Glo because I had a black light under it. I'd have people over and they'd see it and go, "Wow, very cool!"

Ace Frehley performs live at Bergen Performing Arts Center on February 3, 2018 in Englewood, New Jersey.

DEBRA L. ROTHENBERG/GETTY IMAGES

GM: *In the new song "Pursuit of Rock and Roll," you sing, "Just give me Elvis Presley, all my troubles fade away." Being that today is August 16, the 41st anniversary of Elvis' tragic passing, take us back to when KISS was playing a show in San Francisco on August 16, 1977 when Elvis passed away: your memories of that show?*
AF: Vaguely I do. Usually when somebody you admire passes away it takes a while for it to sink in. I didn't even want to believe it. I loved Elvis. There was one Elvis—there was one Hendrix and one Elvis Presley, one Fats Domino and one Little Richard. He was one of a kind. Not only did he do great songs, he did funny silly movies that were entertaining. Elvis just did it all. He performed live in concert, he did great records and he made films.

GM: *I remember seeing photos of you from the '70s putting on your makeup in the dressing room and spotted on your makeup case is an Elvis In Concert backstage pass affixed to it. Did you ever see Elvis live?*
AF: No, and I really regret not going to see him. I remember a good friend of mine was after me to go see Elvis with him and for one reason or another I didn't go. I think I had a hot date. (laughs) So I declined and said that I would catch him some other time but there wasn't another time, sadly.

GM: *"Rockin' With The Boys" was mooted to be penciled in for the KISS album* (Music From) The Elder; *37 years later, it's being released. Did you work off of the original tapes?*
AF: I wrote the chorus for "Rockin' With The Boys" in the '70s. But I could never come up with a good enough verse and bridge to make it a viable tune. I

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Ace Frehley onstage with KISS in San Francisco, California, 1979.

(PHOTO BY STEVE JENNINGS/WIREIMAGE)

experimented and had several versions of that. When I do a box set of old tapes and old cassettes and demos and alternate solos, I'll probably include some of the earlier versions of "Rockin' With The Boys," as well as some other songs I've re-written. Like, the song "Pursuit of Rock and Roll" on my new album has Anton Fig playing drums on that. I wiped all of the guitars and vocals and rewrote it. I did the exact same thing with the song "Off My Back" that was originally called "Hypnotized," and it had completely alternate lyrics but I kept the solo. That track was recorded in the '90s. Anton is playing on "Pursuit of Rock and Roll" and "Off My Back" and they're both older tracks that I transferred from two-inch tape to a hard drive and then imported it into Pro Tools.

GM: *Gene released a massive box set called* The Vault *and you appeared with him at a few* Vault *events. In terms of you assembling a similar box set spanning your entire career, does that hold interest for you?*

AF: I have tons of material. I have a hundred two-inch reels with alternate solos for songs from *The Elder*, all kinds of stuff, jam sessions with other people. Two of the guys from the Alice Cooper band lived near me in Connecticut and they used to come over and jam. I have plenty of jam sessions on tape with a lot of different people and half of them I probably can't even remember. So when I transfer the tapes to my hard drive, listening back will be a big surprise for me. That's a major undertaking.

GM: *What kind of pre-KISS material do you have?*

AF: I have Molimo stuff. Not on two-inch tape, but on quarter-inch tape I have some old recordings of me doing some Stones songs. I think I have some recordings of me at rehearsals with some of my other earlier bands, too. I also have some videos of KISS never released; I have footage of the band on an airplane going to Australia, rehearsing in an old hangar up in upstate New York — Newburgh, New York. It's footage captured in black and white on one of the first Sony portable recording devices, which I bought in Japan.

GM: *Speaking of your pre-KISS band, Molimo, a Jefferson Airplane styled outfit did a demo for RCA in 1971. In 2014, an acetate was found in a barn in upstate New York with a few tracks from that session, "East of Yesterday," "Alone Together," "City of Tears" and "Pleasure Palaces." Have you heard that?*

AF: I've heard about it but I haven't heard it yet. That band sounded like Jefferson Airplane. We had a guy singer and a girl singer. It was a poor man's Jefferson Airplane. (laughs) We did a demo where Sinatra had recorded. It was done in a giant room at RCA. I remember going there and recording; it was a trip. There was a picture of Frank Sinatra on the wall and other people that had recorded there. It was my first taste of a professional recording prior to doing the first KISS album.

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"When I read the comments the fans make on the internet ... invariably 80-90% of the KISS fans want a full blown reunion. I don't know if that's possible; it could be a variation of it. There's no way KISS is gonna go out with a bang with the lineup they have now. It's half of a cover band."

GM: *I had the pleasure of co-producing a new album with you and Fernando Perdomo by your fiancée Rachael Gordon and writing many of the songs on the album. What makes Rachael a special artist?*

AF: Rachael's an amazing singer. She has her own unique style but she can also sing and sound like anyone. She can sing like Ronnie James Dio if she wants to. She has so much talent that's gone untapped for so many years. Prior to the new album we've just finished, *Paper Doll*, I know she's played you some of her earlier stuff off of the album *The Coming Of Spring*, which is really good. She did that 10, 12 years ago. She's been after me to do a record with her and I've been putting it off because I always have other things to do with my busy schedule between touring and recording, plus we're moving soon to a bigger house. It'll be a much bigger house on four acres with a separate guest house that I can turn into a studio. It's a 9,000 square feet home, which is much bigger than the home we've been in. Anyhow, back to Rachael's new album, besides the two covers, which I think turned out great, I think my favorite song on the record is "Myrna Loy," which you wrote. I really like that one and "Crazy River," which is another one you wrote. It's got something. It's really catchy with a great hook.

GM: *You have a massive catalog of material you can perform live, what are the songs the fans most frequently want you to play? My choice is "Dark Light" from* The Elder.

AF: (Laughs) I knew you were gonna say that. "Dark Light" is a song that comes up a lot. "Save Your Love" comes up from time to time, too. I'm gonna try and do some new songs for the KISS Kruise that I'm going on later in the year. These will be some songs that I've never done live before; it'll be something special but I don't want to give anything away right now. Maybe I'll do a couple of songs off my original '78 solo record. I'm gonna use my band for the KISS Kruise. I'm using Gene's band for the dates I'm doing with him in Australia and Japan and that comes down to economics. For the amount of money they're offering me to play in those two countries it's cost effective to use Gene's band to back me up. If I brought my band and paid them their salaries and paid all their airfare there wouldn't be very much left over. So by not bringing them to Australia and Japan I'm saving 40 or 50 thousand dollars.

GM: *You co-wrote two songs on your album with Gene, you're touring with Gene in Australia and you'll be on the upcoming KISS Kruise, fans are clamoring for you to be back in the band. What would you like to see happen?*

AF: When I read the comments the fans make on the internet (every once in a while I'll spend a half hour or an hour reading comments) invariably 80-90% of the KISS fans want a full blown reunion. I don't know if that's possible; it could be a variation of it. There's no way KISS is gonna go out with a bang with the lineup they have now. It's half of a cover band. I love Eric (Singer) and I love Tommy (Thayer) but it's half of a KISS cover band. Paul and Gene are the two original guys and they've got two guys playing my part and Peter's part. I think it works better overseas or in South America where the people aren't as educated as to who is in the band but it's getting tired in America. Ever since 2014 when we were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, pretty much all of America realized that I was not in the band and Peter's not in the band and I think a lot of people in America weren't even sure that I had left. When they made the switch between me and Tommy they really didn't publicize it and I don't think they wanted to. I mean, I remember getting phone calls in 2008, 2009 and people would call me up and say, "Hey, you're playing my hometown, can you get me tickets?" and I'd go, "No, I'm not in the band anymore." I mean that happened multiple times. My departure from the band the second time around wasn't highly promoted.

GM: *But you'd be up for a KISS reunion if asked?*

AF: I would be up for it if the numbers were right and if it was presented to me in the right way, sure. It's not necessarily something that I am craving to do, but I want to do it for the fans because the fans are the ones who made us all famous and rich and turned us into superstars. I want to do what the fans want. I want to make the fans happy and it seems like that's the direction they are pointing towards. I'd be willing to do anything to make the fans happy.